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ABSTRACT

The population of school-aged English language learners (ELLs) has consistently and significantly increased over the past decade, transforming U.S. public schools, instruction, and teacher preparation. This digest discusses the need for increased numbers of teachers of ELLs and the particular linguistic and academic characteristics of ELLs. It focuses on: teacher supply and demand (the need for teachers of ELLs is particularly acute, and while percent of U.S. teachers have taught ELLs, less than 13 percent have received any training or professional development in the area); requirements for preparing teachers of ELLs (bilingual education, English as a Second Language, and mainstream education); and addressing the need (several organizations have developed standards to delineate what teachers of ELLs should know and be able to do, and these standards include such elements as proficiency in two languages, understanding of the impact of students' cultures on their learning, and assisting students in the development of their language abilities). The digest concludes that efforts are now being concentrated in the implementation of programs that incorporate the elements of effective preparation and professional development of teachers of ELLs. (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

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ERIC Digest

By

Beth Antunez

September 2002 EDO-SP-2002-01

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education

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DIGEST

September 2002 EDO-SP-2002-01

The Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of English Language Learners

Beth Antunez

The population of school-aged English language learners (ELLs) has consistently and significantly increased over the past decade, transforming America's public schools, the instruction of its students, and the preparation of its teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires there be a "highly qualified" teacher in every classroom by the end of 2005, and school districts and teacher preparation institutions across the nation face the challenge of preparing and hiring large numbers of teachers while retaining a focus on quality. This digest will discuss the need for increasing the numbers of teachers of ELLs and the particular linguistic and academic characteristics of ELLs.

The Supply and Demand of Teachers for ELLs

During the 1999-2000 school year, 4.4 million students were identified as English language learners (ELLs) in pre-K through 12 public schools. This number represents 9 percent of public school enrollment and a 27 percent increase over the 1997-98 enrollment (Kindler, 2002). In urban school districts, ELLs account for 21 percent of students (Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., 2002).

ELLs are defined as students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English. According to a 1999-2000 survey, over 400 native languages are spoken by the ELL school-age population (Kindler, 2002). The term ELL is often used interchangeably with "limited English proficient" (LEP). Implicit in the definition is that ELLs' English language proficiency is insufficient to academically succeed in English-only classrooms (Lessow-Hurley, 1991). Also implicit is that ELLs have different linguistic and academic needs from the mainstream school population, and that ELLs require teachers qualified to address these needs.

Within the context of the nationwide need to hire teachers, which is projected at 2.2 million or more over the next decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998; Hussar & Gerald, 1996; The White House, 2002), the need for teachers of ELLs is particularly acute due to this population's rapid increase and the additional qualifications required of these teachers. According to the Urban Teacher Challenge Report (Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., 2002), 73 percent of the urban districts surveyed had an immediate demand for bilingual education teachers, while 68 percent had an immediate demand for English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers.

Currently, 41 percent of teachers in the U.S have taught ELLs, while less than 13 percent of U.S. teachers have received any training or professional development on teaching these students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). These figures are alarming in light of the fact that researchers and teacher educators have agreed that teachers of ELLs need at least the following knowledge and skills in order to effectively meet the needs of their students:

- understanding of the basic constructs of bilingualism and second language development;
- nature of language proficiency;
- role of first language and culture in learning;
- demands that mainstream education places on culturally diverse learners;
- capacity to make academic content accessible;
- ability to integrate language and content instruction;
- respect for and incorporation of students' first language in instruction;
- understanding of how differences in language and culture affect students' classroom participation;
- needs and characteristics of students with limited formal schooling;
- understanding and ability to address students from families with little exposure to the norms of U.S. schools; and
- belief in students as individuals for limited English proficiency and that limited academic skills are not deficiencies

(Clair, 1993, 2000, Menken & Look, 2000, p. 22-23, Walqui, 1999).

Requirements for Preparing Teachers of ELLs

Programs through which ELLs are currently being served can be divided into bilingual education, ESL, and mainstream education. Requirements for teacher preparation within each of these programs can differ depending on a variety of factors. However, bilingual education programs generally require teachers trained in and competent to teach students through their native language as well as English; ESL programs require teachers trained to teach English reading, writing, speaking and listening skills to ELLs; and mainstream programs conduct all instruction in English and do not, normally, require teachers to be trained to teach ELLs. For more information on the characteristics of bilingual education and ESL programs, see http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/askncela/22models.htm.

Preparation is further complicated in that not all states provide certification in bilingual education and/or ESL. According to a 1999 survey of State Education Agencies, 39 states and the District of Columbia offer ESL teacher certification or endorsement, while 24 states and the District of Columbia offer bilingual/dual language teacher certification or endorsement (McKnight & Antunez, 1999). In states that do not offer bilingual education or ESL certification, it is unclear what sorts of preparation teachers of ELLs are receiving to enable them to meet the linguistic and academic needs of their students.

Addressing the Need: Guidance

Several national organizations have addressed the issue of teacher preparation by creating standards to delineate what teachers of ELLs should know and be able to do. The following organizations have all developed such standards:

- Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE): Standards for Effective Teaching Practice (1998)
- National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE): Professional

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Bilingual/Multicultural Teachers (1992)
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS): English as a New Language Standards (1998)
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL): Pre-K-12 ESL Teacher Education Standards (forthcoming)

These standards include such elements as proficiency in two languages, an understanding of the impact of students' cultures on their learning, and how to assist students in the development of their language abilities. Increasingly, standards are being used as the foundation for state licensure, teacher preparation and professional development programs to ensure that these programs are inclusive of the ELL population (Menken & Holmes, 2000).

In addition to these organizations' standards, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), an organization of colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs, has adopted a resolution entitled Preparing Teachers for Second Language Learners. Intended to guide its member colleges and universities, the resolution addresses the preparation of all teachers for second language learners. To read the resolution, go to: http://www.aacte.org/Multicultural/bilingual_resolution.htm.

Another guidance instrument, from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) is The National Directory of Teacher Preparation Programs (Preservice and Inservice) for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students. This directory identifies exemplary programs of professional teacher preparation that address, promote, and implement professional preparation for teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. It includes a typology that divides and provides characteristics of the range of programs that prepare teachers for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms into the following seven categories:
- General education with a multicultural emphasis
- Multicultural education
- English as a second language
- English language development and multicultural education
- Bilingual/bicultural education
- Bilingual/multicultural education
- Bilingual/biliterate/multicultural/bicultural education.

To access the directory, go to http://www.Colorado.edu/education/BUENO/crede/intro.html.

Conclusion

While the ELL population rapidly and steadily increases, so too does the need for a teaching force prepared to effectively meet the linguistic and academic needs of this population. The unique knowledge and skills needed in the successful preparation of teachers for this population have been identified. Efforts are now being concentrated in the implementation of programs that incorporate the elements of effective preparation and professional development of teachers of ELLs.

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